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Vice President Darul Uloom Karachi

Memories

(Episode 20)

Development of Korangi Township

This was a time when the late General Muhammad Ayub Khan's martial law had only recently been declared, and he had begun several revolutionary works. Immigrants had been continuously pouring into Pakistan since its founding, and the issue of their housing had not, until now, been fully solved. A majority of the immigrants put up makeshift tents and settled into them. Many lived on footpaths. General Muhammad Ayub Khan Sahab began the Korangi Township project for their housing, and assigned the responsibility of bringing it to completion to the late General Muhammad Azam Khan Sahab. To this end, he began construction of houses in the vast area of Korangi at lightning speed, and would personally visit to monitor its progress from time to time. Thus in a very short period of time, within a few years, a vast residential society extending from Korangi road all the way till Darul Uloom rapidly came into existence. As a result, we also gradually got access to some of the facilities of city life. When water pipes were laid for Korangi Town, we also received a share of them, and thus the pipeline extended until Darul Uloom. The trouble of having to bring water all the way from Sharafi Goth was thus eliminated. A tank was constructed underground, and water was stored in it. After some time electricity supply also reached us, and instead of having to use lanterns and cauldrons, we began enjoying the good graces of electricity itself.

As before, we continued staying in the smallish house which the late Haji Kabeer Ud Din Sahab had constructed and gifted to Darul Uloom. Hazrat Maulana Khurshid Alam Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him) had brought his family from Deoband and shifted into a separate house. Both rooms of this house were now in use by the three of us: myself, *Bhai Sahab* and the late Hakeem Musharraf Husain Sahab. When Hakeem Musharraf Husain Sahab completed his studies the next year, only the two of us were left in the house. This house was far apart from other buildings of Darul Uloom. On its right was a dirt track from which the sound of camel carts would sometimes be heard. The area beyond that was entirely covered in forest. In front of the house, towards the west, a sandy desert stretched for miles. The nearest buildings were the classrooms towards the south-west which would be deserted at night. Thus when the darkness of the night deepened, an eerie silence would enshroud the air. After some time, when *Bhai Sahab* got married, he had to travel to Lahore quite often. As a result, I would often have to stay alone in this atmosphere of dead silence.

Links with the City

From our days as students until the time we started teaching, our residence remained in Darul Uloom most of the time. But since our parents and two brothers stayed in our house in Lasbela House, we would visit home every Thursday.

While people normally have numerous friends during their boyhood days with whom they play and enjoy spending leisure time, I did not have any such friends. My only friend who could best match that description was the late Hakeem Musharraf Husain Sahab whom I have mentioned many times before. But he was a charismatic person who had many friends himself with whom he would spend his holidays, while I would be deprived of their company during holidays. However, respected Muhammad Kaleem Sahab, with whom we had become friends during our stay at Burns Road, would sometimes visit us on Fridays. In those days Hazrat Maulana Shah Abdul Ghani Sahab Phoolpuri (may Allah's mercy be upon him), the illustrious *Khalifa* (spiritual successor) of Hakeem Ul Ummah Hazrat Thanvi (may Allah's mercy be upon him), had come to Karachi. Kaleem Sahab had become *Baiyah* to him, and his personality had become tinged with a distinct colour of his teachings. Thus whenever he visited, his talks would often revolve around Hazrat himself, and I would greatly benefit from them.

Later, the late Hakeem Musharraf Husain Sahab also began visiting our house sometimes on Fridays after Asar. And then for a long time it became our weekly routine that the three of us would go out somewhere after Asar. The hustle and bustle witnessed today in the city was not the same in those days. Our outing itinerary would thus include having tea somewhere in Sadar, and thereafter walking till Frere Hall or *Aiwan-e-Sadr* (The Presidential Palace). We would sometimes also visit the beach at Clifton.

I did not have friendships beyond this during my boyhood life. Rather, looking at other boys my age, I would even feel a sense of loneliness sometimes.

I would stay in the city from Thursday evening to Friday evening or Saturday morning. Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) had built up an excellent library in his house. This consisted of books which our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) had purchased, despite his low income, from various places, and besides *Tafsir*, *Hadith* and *Fiqh*, they also covered various branches of History, Poetry and Literature, Philosophy and Science. Since I loved books, after returning home on Thursdays and meeting my family, I would connect myself to this library of our respected father's (may Allah's mercy be upon him). Obviously it was not possible to read every book, but I would scan each book for its name, topic and information about the author, and glancing through the table of contents, would flip over to whichever topic I found somewhat interesting. In this manner, Alhamdulillah I had gradually become familiar with each book in each bookshelf in our respected father's library, and had also memorized the location of each book. Thus whenever our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) needed any book, he would tell me to bring it, and I would bring it immediately without having to search for it. In this way, I also learned which books can provide help when researching a particular issue.

Our respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him) used to receive several noteworthy magazines and weekly newspapers of the subcontinent. I would at least glance through each newspaper and magazine received every week, and would get awareness of the topics under discussion in the scholarly

circles of the subcontinent. Besides this, since I loved reading and literature, I would also read books written by scholars and noteworthy authors of the time. Besides the writings of the senior scholars of Deoband, I would read the books of Hazrat Maulana Manazir Ahsan Gilani, Hazrat Maulana Sayyid Sulaiman Nadvi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Shibli Numani (may Allah's mercy be upon them) and others. More than the subject-matter of their writings, I would especially take note of the way they presented literary and scholarly topics in easy-to-understand and eloquent literary language. Reading of novels is not considered something good in religious households, but I read all the novels of the late Naseem Hijazi as well. I did this with the thought that if *Maqamat*, *Mutanabbi* and *Sab' Mu'allaqat* can be read to learn Arabic literature, then in order to learn Urdu literature and history the novels of Naseem Hijazi should be much less objectionable. Also, a distinct taste for Urdu literature is attained through them and, on the whole, religious thought also gets support through this.

It was for the same reason that I also read numerous books of Maulana Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi (may Allah's mercy be upon him) with great zeal. Since, with the grace and benevolence of Allah Ta'ala, I had the companionship and nurturing of my teachers and especially my respected father (may Allah's mercy be upon him), and overall had also become attuned to Islamic knowledge, I would sense and also disagree with any views in Maulana Maududi's books which appeared to be deviated from what the *Jamhoor* (majority) hold. But the truth of the matter is that I found his literary style, aimed at making scholarly topics easily understandable, much more effective as well as eloquent than the above-mentioned authors. I also found the manner in which he critiqued Western thoughts rather admirable. At the same time, I regretted that alas! Would that this highly effective critic of Western thought not deviated from the path taken by the *Jamhoor* (majority), or at least not adopted a scathing tone for other scholars in support of his own views, then the Muslim Ummah would have been saved from a great discord. But may Allah Ta'ala bestow his forgiveness upon him. Carried away by literary passion, he displayed almost the same acrimony and sharpness towards traditional scholars as towards Western ideas. A result of this was that those who, in terms of religious literature, limit themselves to his books, (and at least in those days this did apply to members of *Jamaat-e-Islami* and *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba*) then, intentionally or unintentionally, the idea becomes entrenched in their minds that the understanding of Deen which Maulana Maududi has presented has not been presented by other scholars, and that traditional scholars, instead of appreciating the holistic nature of Deen, shut themselves into a shell of a few religious verdicts, which resulted from their following of their elders. And as a result, they failed in correctly guiding the Muslim Ummah. And especially in the political aspect of Islam, they did not play any notable role.

This view gets so deeply ingrained in some people's minds that their conduct with traditional scholars and students of knowledge radiates contempt towards them and arrogance at their own views. Alhamdulillah later on, especially under the leadership of Qazi Husain Ahmad Sahab (may Allah's mercy be upon him), there was much improvement in this regard. But in those days the condition was still like this.

I remember that a team of *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba* had come to tour Darul Uloom when I was in the class of *Mishkat* or *Dawra-e-Hadith*. I had a file in hand which contained my notes from the lessons which our teacher gave in class. I encountered that team of *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba* while I was on my way

somewhere. Their leader (with whom I developed somewhat friendly relations afterwards, and later on he moved to London), after replying to my *Salam*, inquired about the file with a somewhat slanted neck:

“Maulvi Sahab! What are you carrying there?”

I replied: “These are my teacher’s lectures which I note during class.”

“Does this contain discussions about *Ilm-e-Ghayb* (knowledge of the Unseen)?” he retorted with a condescending smirk on his face.

This question was asked with a thinly veiled sarcasm that: “You people remain embroiled in such sectarian disputes. What relation do you have with the real effort of Deen (which, in reality, it is us who are doing)?”

In view of their manner of speech, I did not find it appropriate to prolong the conversation any further. So I gave a brief reply and moved on. Due to numerous incidents I had personally witnessed, it was clear that to them every service of Deen besides what Maulana Maududi Sahab was doing was an expression of sectarianism, narrow-mindedness and myopia.

The neighbourhood of Lasbela House had only recently begun being populated when we moved there. Previously, there used to be some huts of construction workers. At that time, the very same poor people had built a shed-like Masjid and gave it the name “Masjid Nu’man”. They also selected the Imam of the Masjid by themselves, and his recitation was such that the validity of prayers behind him was concluded after prolonged deliberations. Some *bid’aat* (religious innovations) were on top of that. But instead of praying alone, our respected father (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) tolerated praying behind that Imam. Afterwards the founder of English Boot House, the late respected Taj Sahab, renovated the Masjid by taking up all expenses upon himself. At that time, he provided appropriate support to that Imam Sahab and appointed Maulana Azizur Rahman Sahab as Imam in his place, who is *MashaAllah* fulfilling his duties admirably until today.

But the surroundings of the Masjid witnessed a constant inflow of educated people. A shop-owner of the locality, the late respected Masood Sahab, was an active member of *Jamaat-e-Islami*, and he played an active role in spreading the work of *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba* among the youth of the neighbourhood.

Whenever I would meet members of *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba* of my age in Masjid Nu’man, instead of avoiding them I would meet them cordially, and would also cooperate with them in their good works. Gradually, they began feeling that this is not some stranger. Consequently, a few of them also became frank with me, and would also sometimes ask me *masail* (religious verdicts) pertaining to prayer, fasting, etc., but together with the words:

“We are asking you, but together with your reply also cite the evidence from the Quran and Sunnah for what you say. Because we are not from those who blindly trust the words of a Maulvi Sahab (scholar), rather explain your reply based on the Quran and Sunnah.”

I was asked this by such a fellow of the *Jamiyat* who used to meet me often, and had also become frank with me. I replied to him:

“My brother! Complying with your request, if I were to recite a verse from the Quran or a Hadith, would you understand its meaning? And would you understand whether my reply is correctly derived from that verse or Hadith?”

He replied: “No, but you tell its translation as well. With the translation, we would understand whether your evidence is correct or not.”

I said: “How would you know whether I have translated it correctly or not?”

He replied: “We know you will not mistranslate it.”

I said: “Sometimes the same passage can have multiple possible translations. How would you know which translation I have done? And assuming the translation is correct, how would you know if, for the verse or Hadith I quote, there does not exist another verse or Hadith which indicates a different ruling?”

At this he became quiet. And gradually his demands also became less, and then later his mindset also changed.

I was aware of this mindset of theirs, but at the time I was not aware of any other effective movement for the implementation of Islam in the country. I thus considered it appropriate to help and support them in their efforts towards resolving the issues faced by the Muslim Ummah as a whole. And our respected father (may Allah’s mercy be upon him) would often quote about them the following saying of Hazrat Usmani Ghani (may Allah be pleased with him):

"إِنْ هُمْ أَحْسَنُوا فَأَحْسِنْ مَعَهُمْ، وَإِنْ أَسَاءُوا، فَاجْتَنِبْ إِسَاءَتَهُمْ"

Meaning: “When they do something good, then do good with them, and if they do anything bad then avoid the bad.”

For this reason, I had maintained good relations with the workers of *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba*, and would also sometimes, on their request, address them in their gatherings. In those same days respected Munawwar Hassan Sahab, who later became *Ameer* (leader) of *Jamaat-e-Islami*, was a member of *Islami Jamiat-e-Talaba*. He was also present in many of those gatherings. I observed many good characteristics among the workers of the *Jamiat* as well. And I also found the passion and determination for struggle and hard work in many young men among them quite enviable. I have also always been an admirer of their organizational skills. However, I would also occasionally convey my counsels regarding the mindset which I have mentioned above, and Alhamdulillah their effect was also witnessed. Later I became so busy myself that these activities came to an end.

Teaching of *Nahw* (Arabic grammar) and *Sarf* (morphology)

During my initial years of teaching, I came to teach all books of Arabic *Nahw* and *Sarf*, from *Nahw Mir* to *Sharh Jami*, but I never came to terms with teaching *Nahw* and *Sarf* as some philosophical concepts. Thus the dialectical debates, based on *Tahreer Sumbat*, *Sawal Kabuli* and *Sawal Basooli* etc., which are often generated when going through *Kafiya* and *Sharh Jami* (rather nowadays these debates have begun from *Hidayatun Nahw* itself), though I had undergone them myself, I always bore in mind, and also impressed upon the students, that the real foundation of *Nahw* and *Sarf* is their use by the Arabs. And to assert that they are subject to logical reasoning is such a far-fetched idea that by getting entangled in this their real objective (which is to be able to write and speak correctly) is lost. Normally, delving into these dialectical debates is rationalized with the reasoning that students' minds are broadened through these, and they get to develop astuteness by getting used to dissecting arguments, which in the terminology of Madrasas is called "تشحيد الأذهان" (sharpening the mind). But this point would have been generally correct if the ability to apply the rules of *Nahw* and *Sarf* had been fully inculcated in the students, and when students had fully developed the ability to read, write and speak correctly. In that case this objective could have been attained as an additional benefit, and perhaps this is what used to happen initially. But now the situation is such that students are not even able to read Arabic texts correctly, let alone writing and speaking, and they become entangled into these debates from the start, as a result of which they are not able to reap the real benefits of *Nahw* and *Sarf*.

However, students had become habituated with the method of teaching "*Kafiya*" etc. which had been continuing in Madrasas since ages, and for a teacher to deviate from this method was sufficient to render himself unpopular among the students. If a teacher did not initiate those debates on his own, then a student would ask a question related to them. The solution I devised for this is that during the first few days of teaching "*Kafiya*" I employed the same customary method. But then I explained its flaws to the students. From my respected father's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) personal book collection, I got my hands on Allama Suyuti's (may Allah's mercy be upon him) book "*Al-Iqtiraah Fee Usool An-Nahw*". With its help, I presented the real foundations of *Nahw* to the students. And if ever a student asked a question pertaining to the dialectical disputes, I would ask him to read the text of the book. He would invariably falter, and through this he would realize that in pursuing those philosophical debates, how far he had strayed from the real purpose and objective of *Nahw* (which is احتراز عن الخطاء اللفظي في الكلام (avoiding grammatical mistakes in speech)). And thereafter I taught the entire book with my own method.